

Message Text

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14-11

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5418

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 2240

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/I; DAKAR FOR DODD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, EINV, LI

SUBJ: STRIKE AT USTC: REFLECTIONS OF FIRESTONE INCIDENT

REF: MONROVIA 1822

SUMMARY: WORKERS ON STRIKE AGAINST UNITED STATES TRADING COMPANY (USTC) APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY THE PUBLICITY SURROUNDING THE RECENT FACE-OFF BETWEEN FIRESTONE PLANTATIONS COMPANY AND GOL. MANAGEMENT REACTIONS ALSO SHAPED BY KNOWLEDGE OF FIRESTONE INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.

1. LIBERIAN STAR 24 APRIL REPORTED 300 WORKERS OF UNITED STATES TRADING COMPANY (USTC--LOCAL FORD DEALER AND FIRESTONE SUB-SIDIARY) WENT ON STRIKE 23 APRIL, DEFYING UNION LEADERSHIP. PURPORTED CAUSE IS COMPANY'S DISMISSAL OF UNION SHOP STEWARD FOR STEALING. WORKERS ACCUSE MANAGEMENT OF HAVING FABRICATED EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT STEALING CHARGE IN ORDER TO SABOTAGE CURRENT UNION CONTRACT RENEGOTIATIONS. RUMOR ALSO CIRCULATING THAT USTC INTENDED EARLIER TO FIRE OVER 100 WORKERS BUT AFTER RECENT FIRESTONE INCIDENT (MONROVIA 1822) WAS AFRAID TO DO SO, HENCE NOW IS ATTEMPTING REDUCE ITS LABOR FORCE BY OTHER MEANS. ONE UNION OFFICIAL NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH PRESENT STRIKE HAS

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ADMITTED USTC HAS GOOD CASE IN FIRING SHOP STEWARD. HOWEVER,

USTC REPORTEDLY HAS ALREADY AGREED TO REINSTATE HIM QTE PENDING
FURTHER INVESTIGATION UNQTE.

COMMENT: STRIKE MUST BE INTERPRETED IN LIGHT OF GOL'S RECENT
PUBLIC FLAYING OF FIRESTONE PLANTATIONS COMPANY. SINCE DATE
OF MONROVIA 1822, GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ON FIRESTONE HAS CON-
TINUED. PRESIDENT TOLBERT VISITED THE HARBEL PLANTATION AND
REPORTED SELF APPALLED BY LIVING CONDITIONS, VOWED THEY MUST
BE IMPROVED. MINISTER OF EDUCATION VISITED LATER AND DROPPED
THINLY-VEILED HINTS THAT FIRESTONE WOULD BE EXPECTED TO BUILD,
FUND AND OPERATE BOTH A SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND A VOCATIONAL/
TECHNICAL SCHOOL ON THE PLANTATION. PRESENT STRIKE NOT SIGNIFI-
CANT IN SELF, BUT WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS CLEARLY
COLORED BY KNOWLEDGE OF FIRESTONE INCIDENT. FURTHERMORE,
REPORT OF USTC CAVE-IN ON REHIRING, EVEN IF UNTRUE, ILLUSTRATES
DEGREE TO WHICH FREEDOM OF FOREIGN BUSINESSES TO FIRE WORKERS
IS RESTRICTED BY EFFECT OF GOL ACTIONS IN FIRESTONE CASE.
MANFULL

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